15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

684 stating his case to bystanders: 'I "pushed" these young
681 men to kill you because you took my wife; she was not promised to you, she was never yours and always belonged to me. That is why you die.'

Wife-stealing usually results in the woman being brutally beaten or speared, and whether she goes willingly with the seducer or is forcefully stolen makes no difference to her punishment. She shows no resentment, and indeed she regards lenient treatment as a slight to her charms.

• 848 Because of Yulengor marriage customs the question of illegitimate children does not occur. There are frequent illicit relations, but as every girl has a husband her children do not arouse comment. If an irregular union should be openly consummated, the children do not suffer permanently, for irregular births are absorbed into the horde and into relationships which they would have had if their mother had been correctly mated.

163 Women have about two children each, though some have as many as five or six and one I know has a dozen. Many children are born, but the population is not increasing, except on mission stations where medical attention is avail-
[165] able and child-welfare taught. In the bush, infant mortality is high, and long periods elapse between births. Children
862 are not weaned till they are five or six years of age, and I have seen grandmothers ten years and more after the birth of their last child successfully suckling grandchildren.

844 In child-birth Nature is allowed to take her course and no assistance is given beyond occasional pressure. If the child is born normally and quickly, it probably survives, and so does the mother, but when anything abnormal occurs there
[845] is a stillborn child and the mother is often injured in a way that prevents her from having any more children. Blood accompanying the placenta is tabu and is meticulously buried. Ordinarily the mother is walking within three or four hours of a birth, and within a day she goes hunting.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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FAMILY LIFE IN THE JUNGLE

Theories of conception and birth have been severely jolted in recent years, for until recently it was not known that intercourse had any connection with conception, and Yulengor regarded it as being merely a natural and satisfying function. There are no virgins in aboriginal society, for at an early age a girl is handed over to her husband and is married for the rest of her life. In parts of western Arnhem Land, when hordes gather for ceremonies, their hosts provide them with food and also advance their wives for the visitors' well-being. The question of illegitimate children does not arise, for births are thought to be the work of a spirit.

At some time when the potential father is hunting, the spirit of his prospective child comes to him and presents him with a large fish or turtle and enables him to spear it. Not yet comprehending the omen, the man returns to camp with the spirit at heel, and when all are asleep this spirit enters the mother and begins its preparations for birth. In a variation of this belief, the spirit follows the mother when she goes for water, and jumps into the water so as to enter the woman. When a man knows that his wife is to become a mother he endeavours to recall some unusual experience that has befallen him in hunting. His mind dwells on any large fish he has caught, perhaps in the last month, or maybe several years previously, and he regards this incident as marking the coming of the spirit-child.

Half-caste children compelled a readjustment of these ideas. First it was assumed that eating the white man's food or the wearing of white clothing caused white-skinned offspring. An anthropologist, visiting an Arnhem Land mission station at the invitation of a missionary of irreproachable character, asked an aboriginal why his normal full-blood son had a light skin. The father's startling reply was: 'The child's mother works in the missionary's house.'

According to a revised and popular birth theory, intercourse is necessary only as an act of preparation. In itself